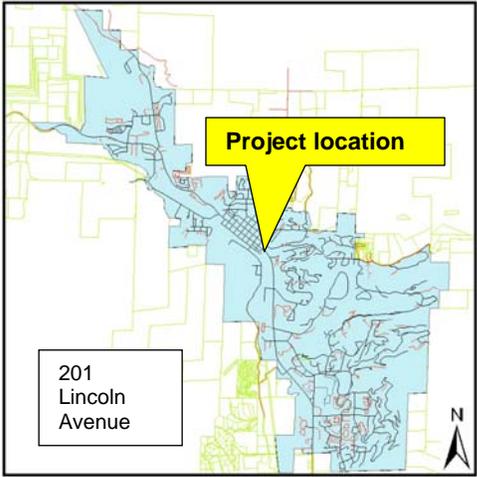


**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY
 DEVELOPMENT STAFF REPORT**

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION ITEM 4A:	
Project Name:	Rabbit Ears Motel Sign- 201 Lincoln Avenue
Prepared By:	Alexis Casale, Historic Preservation Planner (Ext 202)
Through:	Tyler Gibbs, AIA Director of Planning & Community Development (Ext. 244)
HPC	November 18, 2010
Planning Commission (PC):	N/A
City Council (CC):	N/A
Zoning:	Commercial Old Town (CO)
Applicant:	Rabbit Ears Motel, Inc Greg Koehler PO Box 770573 Steamboat Springs, CO 80477
Request:	City of Steamboat Springs Historic Register Application



Staff Report - Table of Contents		
Section		Pg
I.	Staff Analysis Summary	4A-2
II.	Background	4A-2
III.	Principal Discussion Items	4A-2
IV.	Nomination Description	4A-3
V.	Project Analysis	4A-3
VI.	Historic Preservation Commission	4A-3
VII.	Staff Finding	4A-3
VIII.	Attachments	4A-4

I. CITY OF STEAMBOAT SPRINGS HISTORIC REGISTER – STAFF ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Staff finds that the Rabbit Ears Motel Sign at 201 Lincoln Avenue is eligible to the City’s Historic Register as an Historic Landmark. The Rabbit Ears Motel Sign is listed on the Routt County Register of Historic Places and the State Register of Historic Properties. Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission approve listing of the Rabbit Ears Motel Sign as an Historic Landmark.

Rabbit Ears Motel Sign- 201 Lincoln Avenue



II. BACKGROUND

The City of Steamboat Springs Historic Register was created in 2009. The Historic Preservation Policy Review Committee reviewed historic preservation policies in 2007 and 2008 and recommended the creation of the City’s historic register. The Committee also recommended that all properties within the City of Steamboat Springs already listed on the Routt County Register of Historic Places be automatically listed on the newly created City Register. Additionally, the Committee recommended that the City of Steamboat Springs designate the City-owned historic properties on the City of Steamboat Springs Historic Register.

III. PRINCIPAL DISCUSSION ITEMS

Since the Rabbit Ears Motel Sign is already listed on the Routt County Register of Historic Places and the State Register of Historic Properties, the Rabbit Ears Motel Sign is eligible to the City of Steamboat Springs Historic Register.

IV. NOMINATION DESCRIPTION

See attached Steamboat Springs, Routt County and State historic register nominations for information regarding the nominated property.

V. HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION (HPC)

The Historic Preservation Commission will review the nomination for the Rabbit Ears Motel Sign to the City of Steamboat Springs Historic Register on November 18, 2010.

VI. PROJECT ANALYSIS

The following section provides staff analysis of the application as it relates to nomination criteria as outlined in Ordinance 2230. It is intended to highlight those areas that may be of interest or concern to HPC, staff, or the public. For a comprehensive list of designation criteria, standards and requirements applicable to this proposal please refer to Ordinance 2230 or contact the staff planner.

A) KEY ISSUES

Ordinance 2230, Sec. 26-84(f)

- 1) *Staff Analysis:* **Eligible;** the attached historic register nomination suggests that the Rabbit Ears Motel Sign qualifies for listing on the City of Steamboat Springs Historic Register as an Historic Landmark.

VII. STAFF FINDING & RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended Resolution

The City of Steamboat Springs's Historic Preservation Commission hereby resolves that the Rabbit Ears Motel Sign at 201 Lincoln Avenue, which is more particularly described as Lot 3, Block 24 of The Original Town of Steamboat Springs, Section 17, Township 6 North, Range 84 West, Steamboat Springs, CO, is eligible for listing on the Steamboat Springs Register of Historic Places as an Historic Landmark under Criterion 1 in the area of History, Criterion 2 in the area of Architecture and Criterion 3 in the area of Geography as set forth in the Routt County Register of Historic Places and the State Register of Historic Properties designations and approves inclusion of the Rabbit Ears Motel Sign in the Steamboat Springs Register of Historic Places.

Recommended Motion

The Historic Preservation Commission moves to approve the resolution from the staff report designating the Rabbit Ears Motel Sign to the Steamboat Springs Register of Historic Places.

VIII. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – City of Steamboat Springs Historic Resource Application

Attachment 2- Routt County Register of Historic Places nomination

Attachment 3- State Register of Historic Properties nomination



HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION APPLICATION INFORMATION

Thank you for your interest in Steamboat Springs' Historic Register Program. Attached is the application form and instructions on how to complete the form. A computer-generated version of the form is acceptable. The application is the permanent public record of why the property is significant and warrants the recognition and protection provided by Historic Landmark designation. Attached is the application form, instructions for completing the application, and the text of a sample application.

The Historic Preservation Commission was established by City ordinance (XXXChapter , Revised Municipal Code) in 2009. Among its responsibilities are to identify and designate properties of historical, architectural, and geographical importance to the City of Steamboat Springs. Once a property has been designated, the Historic Preservation Commission has the additional responsibility of reviewing and approving exterior alterations (repair, rehabilitation, addition, or demolition) to make sure the structure retains its historic character.

Designation is a five-step process that takes approximately 60 days from the time a complete application is submitted to the Historic Preservation Office. A pre-application conference can be scheduled with staff to discuss the form, criteria, and whether the property in question meets the criteria.

1. Preliminary investigation focuses on three questions:
 - Is the application complete?
 - Does the proposed property meet the criteria for designation?
 - Has the owner consented to the designation?
2. If the preliminary review is positive, the Historic Preservation Office sets a public hearing date and time that allows for the required owner notification period. Once the date has been set, all owners of record are notified by mail of the date, time, and place of the hearing and the affect designation will have on the subject property.
3. The public hearing on designation is intended to allow members of the public to comment for or against the designation or to ask questions of the Commission about the affect of designation. It is also an opportunity for the applicant to present information about the historical, architectural, and/or geographical significance of the property to the Commission and the public
4. Upon closure of the public hearing, the Commission must notify the owner(s) and City Council in writing as to the decision of the Commission.
5. An Historic Landmark is officially designated once the resolution is recorded.

If you have any questions about the application form or designation process, contact the City's Historic Preservation Office at 879-2060. Please submit the completed application for designation to:

City of Steamboat Springs
Historic Preservation Office
Centennial Hall – 124 10th Street
PO Box 775088
Steamboat Springs, CO 80477
(970) 879-2060

**STEAMBOAT SPRINGS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION**

Property Identification

1. Address of Resource: 201 Lincoln Avenue
Steamboat Springs, CO 80487
2. Legal Description of Property: The Rabbit Ears Motel Sign is located in Lot 3, Block 24 of the Original Town of Steamboat Springs, Section 17, Township 6 North, Range 84 West, otherwise known as 201 Lincoln Avenue. The boundary includes the sign and the land extending three feet in each direction to form a rectangle from the footprint of the sign.
3. Historic Name: Rabbit Ears Motel Sign
Current Name: Rabbit Ears Motel Sign
4. Historic Use: Commerce
Present Use: Commerce

Historical Data Summary

5. Year of Construction: 1953
Source of Information: Colorado State Register of Historic Properties nomination
6. Architect or Builder: Unknown
Source of Information: Colorado State Register of Historic Properties nomination
7. Original Owner: H.L. and Evelyn Beswick
Source of Information: Colorado State Register of Historic Properties nomination

Photographs

8. Attach at least two (2) current 5x7 or larger photographs (black and white or color) showing the views of the property from the public right-of-way(s) and any important features or details. Polaroid photographs are not adequate. If available, attach copies of historic photographs of the structure.
9. Sketch Map.

Statement of Significance

10. Explain how the resource meets the criteria established in Sec.26-84(g) for Local Landmark Designation. Please cite specific criteria in the summary. A Local Landmark must meet the criteria for Historic Resource designation and at least two of the following additional criteria:

See attached Colorado State Register of Historic Properties nomination

Architectural Description

11. Concisely describe the resource and its surrounds.

See attached Colorado State Register of Historic Properties nomination

Bibliography

12. Provide a list of research sources used in compiling this application.

See attached Colorado State Register of Historic Properties nomination

Application Information

13. Owner: Rabbit Ears Motel, Inc. (contact: Greg Koehler)
Mailing Address: PO Box 770573, Steamboat Springs, CO 80487
Telephone: (970) 879-1150

14. Owner Consent to Designation:

I / We, the undersigned, acting as owner(s) of, the property described in this application for Local Landmark designation do, hereby, give my consent to the designation of this structure as a Local Landmark .

Signature: Greg W. Koehler Lyle F. Koehler

Printed name: GREG W. KOEHLER LYLE F. KOEHLER

Date: 10/18/2010

15. Applicant/Preparer Name: Laureen Lafferty Schaffer

Affiliation/ Interest in Property: N/A

Address: PO Box 770662, Steamboat Springs, CO 80477

Telephone: (970) 871-8797

COPY

5RT1008

ROUTT COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD
APPLICATION FORM FOR LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION

Name of Site or Property to be used for Designation: _____

Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

Other Names Site or Property may have been called: _____

N/A

Property is being nominated as a: Site _____ Building _____ District _____
Structure xx (Check one. See Helpful Hints for definitions.)

Physical Address: 201 Lincoln Avenue, Steamboat Springs, CO

Name of Owner: Rabbit Ears Motel, Inc.

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 770573, Steamboat Springs, CO 80477

Contact Name: Greg Koehler Phone: (970) 879-1150

Contact Address (If different from Owner): Same

Preparer (If different from Contact): Tina McPherson Phone: (970) 871-6305
Historic Routt County!

Following are 8 parts to this application process. Each part must be completed in full and submitted with eight (8) copies, for the application to be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Board. Completed applications should be submitted for consideration to the Routt County Historic Preservation Board (RCHPB), P.O. Box 773598, Steamboat Springs, CO 80477, or hand deliver to the Board of County Commissioners' Office, Courthouse Annex, 136 Sixth Street, one month before the meeting of the Board. RCHPB meets quarterly (typically the second Wednesday of March, June, September, and December at 5 p.m. in the Courthouse Annex). Verify time and place with the RCHPB Assistant (879-0108).

Part 1: Legal Description

A copy of your most recent tax assessment notice from the Routt County Assessor's Office will suffice.

Larger properties, such as ranches, may require a more detailed description. It is important that only the portion of the property being nominated is included in the legal description. Your application should state clearly whether the property is to be nominated as a site, building, district, or structure. Please consult an RCHPB Member or staff if you need help with this determination.

Part 2: Statement of Significance

Choose all that apply; only one is necessary for designation.

- A. Its character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of Routt County, the State of Colorado, or the United States.
- B. Its location as a site of a significant historic event.
- C. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of Routt County.
- D. Its exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, or historic heritage of Routt County.
- E. Its portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style.
- F. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.
- G. Its identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of Routt County.
- H. Its embodiment of elements of architectural design, detail, materials, and/or craftsmanship that represent a significant architectural innovation.
- I. Its relationship to other distinctive areas that are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on an historic, cultural, or architectural motif.
- J. Its unique location or singular physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, a community, or Routt County.

The Statement of Significance must explain how your property meets the criterion or criteria you have marked. How do the specific facts about your property relate to themes or patterns of historical development that make up the history (or prehistory) of Routt County? (see "Historic Context of Routt County" for useful information – available at Tread of the Pioneers Museum). For Criterion C, explain what or how the person contributed to the culture or development of Routt County. Appropriate footnotes or APA style citations are required. Include a bibliography describing references, including interviews. Please do not exceed 3 pages in length. If you have discovered additional information about the property that doesn't necessarily apply to the above criteria, please include it in the addendum. You will be helping us build the written history of Routt County.

Part 3: Architectural Description

Submit an architectural description of the structure. If more than one building is included in the property, describe all structures and indicate whether they are contributing (50 years or older) or non-contributing (less than 50 years old or with significant alterations which may have affected the historic integrity of the structure).

Part 4: Maps

Location map: Include a City or County map with an arrow to show where the building is located. Site map: if more than one building is being nominated (ranch, camp, church

grounds, etc.), include a site map with a legend indicating everything that is being nominated. Maps should be 8 1/2" x 11".

Part 5: Photographs

Submit at least one historic and one current photo of each structure being nominated. Multiple views of the structure(s) are encouraged.

Part 6: Statement of Owner Support

I RONALD & LYLE KOEHLER and GREGORY KOEHLER am/are 100 percent owner of the RABBIT EARS MOTEL property and am requesting that this property be designated as historic in Routt County at this time.

Ronald H. Koehler
Name
Lyle F. Koehler
5/19/03
Date

Greg M. Koehler
Name
5/19/03
Date

Part 7: Notification

After my property has been designated, I agree to notify RCHPB of any intention to alter, demolish, move or remove the designated property. I understand that I must notify RCHPB of such intention at least fifteen (15) days prior to undertaking any such work. I understand that I am responsible for notifying any subsequent purchaser of the property of this notification requirement. The Board may revoke the designation of the site hereunder unless the subsequent purchaser agrees in writing to the provisions of this Section 7. (Routt County Resolution No. 93-006, Section 7: Notification.)

I have read this Notification clause and understand its content.

Ronald H. Koehler
Lyle F. Koehler
Signed Greg M. Koehler

Date 5/19/03

Part 8: Addendum(a)

All nominations become part of a permanent, written history of Routt County. Your work on this application becomes a valuable part of that resource. Include any other information you have discovered in the course of your research. Thank you for your assistance in this important work of compiling an historic record of Routt County.

CITY OF STEAMBOAT SPRINGS SALES TAX REBATE: If your designated property is within Routt County and you purchase materials in the City of Steamboat Springs, you may be eligible for a sales tax rebate for materials used in restoring or rehabilitating your designated property. Contact the Steamboat Springs Historic Preservation Specialist for more information (871-8278) BEFORE making any expenditures on the project.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Owner Name/Address

Account: R6776283
 RABBIT EARS MOTEL, INC.
 P.O BOX 770573
 STEAMBOAT SPRINGS CO 804770573

Year: 2003 | District: 20SS

KVS #: 20SSG6283 | St: A

Parcel Number: 145024003 | MH Space: | Seq: |

Street No: | Dir: | No#: | Street Name: | Type: |

Location City: | Location Zip: ? | Acct Type: COMM | Lagt: |

BACode: | Owner Id: | Owner Location: | Map No: |

Legal Description

PT OF LOTS 1,2,3 ALL OF LOTS 10,11 & 12 & ALLEY ADJOINING SAID LOTS BLK 24 ORIGINAL TOWN OF SS & LOT 1 KOEHLER SUBD

Business Name

Tax Items
 Protest (T)
 CAMA (A)
 Situs
 Pre/Suc
 Mobile Auth
 Personal (P)
 Mobile
 Remarks
 Value
 Oil and Gas
 Tract
 Tax Sale
 State Asd
 Recording
 Condo
 Spc Asmt
 Block
 Mines
 History
 Sales
 Sibling
 Misc (M)
 Flags
 Exemption
 Sketch

Version	V. Date	Time	ID	Appl	New Version
20020419001	19-APR-2002	10:05 AM	AJW	EGAM	20030306000

TYPE	ACTUAL	ASSD	ACRES	SQ FT
COMMERCIAL	3,847,000	1,115,630	1.280	
TOTAL	3,847,000	1,115,630	1.280	

Queries

NAME

Current Year	Prior Version	Tax Trx
Prior Year	Ne(x)t Version	
Next Year	Characteristics	Property Card
	Clear	Exit

**Ownership History of Part of Lots 1, 2, 3; All of Lots 10, 11, 12 &
Alley Adjoining Said Lots BLK 24 Original Town of
Steamboat Springs, CO
& Lot 1 Koehler Subdivision**

<u>Grantor (Seller)</u>	<u>Grantee (Buyer)</u>	<u>Deed Nos.</u>	<u>Date Sold</u>
SS Company	University of Colorado	Book 164, Page 412	03/29/1930
University of Colorado	SS Company	Book 170, Page 544	07/02/1931
SS Company	Rocky Mt. Miraquelle Spa Company	Book 170, Page 552	07/02/1931
Fossard, H. W.	Steamboat Springs Company	Book 184, Page 5	01/29/1935
Rocky Mt. Miraquelle Spa, Inc.	Steamboat Springs Company	Book 182, Page 598	01/29/1935
Steamboat Springs Company	Town of Steamboat Springs	Book 186, Page 4	08/13/1935
Town of Steamboat Springs	Beswick, H. L.	Book 254, Page 444	03/20/1953
Beswick, H. L.	Beswick, H. L. & Evelyn L. (JT)	Book 256, Page 84	04/24/1953
Town of Steamboat Springs	Beswick, H. L.	Book 259, Page 30 "Alley running through Block 24, adjoining 4-5-6-7-8-9"	02/08/1954
Beswick, H. L. & Evelyn L.	Ralston, Morton M. & Eva (JT)	Book 308, Page 45	05/03/1962
Ralston, Morton M. and Eva	Parkes, Gerard F. & Marjorie H. (JT)	Book 318, Page 408	07/16/1964

**Ownership History of Pt. of Lots 1, 2, 3; All of Lots 10, 11, 12 &
Alley Adjoining Said Lots BLK 24 Original Town of
Steamboat Springs, CO
& Lot 1 Koehler Subdivision
(Continued)**

<u>Grantor (Seller)</u>	<u>Grantee (Buyer)</u>	<u>Deed Nos.</u>	<u>Date Sold</u>
*Greeley Neon Sign Company	Parkes, Gerard F. & Marjorie H. (JT)	Book 330, Page 375	09/27/1967
Parkes, Gerald F. & Marjorie H.	Barnes, Ellis Murvon & F. Delaine	Book 335, Page 190 "Including located alley"	12/23/1968
Barnes, Ellis Murvon & F. Delaine	Koehler, Ronald G. & Lyle F. (JT)	Book 347, Page 131 "Including located alley"	04/02/1971
Koehler, Ronald G. & Lyle F.	Koehler, Ronald G. (1/2 Int.) & Lyle F. Koehler (1/2 Int.)	Book 653, Page 338	04/19/1990
Koehler, Ronald G & Lyle F.	Rabbit Ears Motel, Inc.	Book 662, Page 917 "And Lot 1 Koehler Subdivision"	04/18/1991

*Copies of information relative to this transaction follow these Ownership Histories, courtesy of the Routt County Clerk & Recorder's Office, Steamboat Springs, CO.

After Routt County Assessor's Office, Property Ownership Book, Original Addition, First Addition and A-C, and Subdivisions E-K, n.p.

**Ownership History of Lot 1 and Lot 2,
Koehler Subdivision, Steamboat Springs, CO**

LOT 1

<u>Grantor (Seller)</u>	<u>Grantee (Buyer)</u>	<u>Deed Nos.</u>	<u>Date Sold</u>
Koehler, Ronald G. & Lyle F.	Koehler, Ronald G. (1/2 Int.) & Lyle F. Koehler (1/2 Int.)	Book 653, Page 338	04/19/1990
Koehler, Ronald G. & Lyle F.	Rabbit Ears Motel, Inc.	Book 662, Page 917	04/18/1991

LOT 2

<u>Grantor (Seller)</u>	<u>Grantee (Buyer)</u>	<u>Deed Nos.</u>	<u>Date Sold</u>
Koehler, Ronald G. & Lyle F.	City of Steamboat Springs	No Book or Page Nos. "Tax Exempt"	08/12/1982

After Routt County Assessor's Office, Property Ownership Book, Subdivisions E-K, n.p.

Quit Deed, Made this 21st day of September 1967 in the year of

our Lord one thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven between

Greeley Neon Sign Company

a corporation duly organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the State of Colorado, of the first part, and **GERARD F. PARKES and MARJORIE H. PARKES**, as joint tenants, also known as **GERARD F. PARKS and MARJORIE H. PARKS**

of the County of Routt and State of Colorado, of the second part,

WITNESSETH, That the said party of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of other good consideration and One and No/100 **DOLLARS**,

to the said party of the first part in hand paid by the said parties of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby confessed and acknowledged, hath remised, released, sold, conveyed and **QUIT-CLAIMED**, and by

these presents doth remise, release, sell, convey and **QUIT-CLAIM** unto the said parties of the second part, in joint tenancy

all the right, title, interest, claim and demand which the said party of the first part hath in and to the following described Lots situate, lying and being in the County of Routt and State of Colorado, to-wit:

Lots One (1), Two (2), Three (3), Ten (10), Eleven (11) and Twelve (12); and that portion of the vacated alley abutting said lots, all in Block Twenty-four (24), Town of Steamboat Springs, Colorado; and party of the first part hereby releases any and all rights and liens in and to the foregoing real estate and against parties of the second part which may have arisen as a result of that certain Transcript of Judgment as recorded in Book 328, page 367, Routt County records.

Transcript of Judgment Docket, Weld County, District Court

Recorded at 415 City of Ft. Collins File 33 1967
 Docket No. 37296
 CASE NO. 328 PAGE 367

NO.	JUDGMENT DEBITORS	JUDGMENT CREDITORS	JUDGMENT		THIRD OF ENTRY	THIS JUDGMENT MADE PUBLIC BY THE CLERK OF DISTRICT COURT	MAGNITUDE OF THIS JUDGMENT					
			AMOUNT OF JUDGMENT	CASH								
6853	PARKS, MARJORIE M., GERARD E., PARKS, and O. W. MARTIN.	GREBLEY NEON SIGN CO.	1069.08	35.90	Nov. 17 66	52	1881	1884				

STATE OF COLORADO,
WELD COUNTY

In the District Court, within and for the County of Weld, Colorado, at the _____ JANUARY _____ A. D. 1967.

MARY DAVIS, LOUIS G. DALTON,
 GERARD E. PARKS, MARJORIE
 H. PARKS, and O. W. MARTIN
 Defendant

I, _____ Robert H. Rhodes, Clerk of said Court, do hereby certify that the above is a full and correct transcript of the entries in the above entitled action, as the same appears in the Judgment Docket, kept at my office.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and the seal of the said Court, at Greeley this _____ day of _____ 1967.

ROBERT H. RHODES
 Clerk of the District Court of Weld County, Colorado

By _____ Deputy Clerk



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Historic Context

Recreation tourism has traditionally played an important role in the economic welfare of Steamboat Springs. The varied amenities of the region, including the hot springs, hunting, skiing, and other opportunities for outdoor recreation has drawn a wide variety of tourists to the Yampa Valley since the early 1900s. The arrival of the railroad in 1909 opened up whole new vistas of accessibility, and improved roads further increased the availability of the area to visitors during the ensuing years. Early tourism in Steamboat Springs peaked in the 1920s, and declined during the next two decades due to the Great Depression in the 1930s and World War II in the 1940s.¹ However, this trend was changing again by the 1950s.

Steamboat Springs drew a record number of tourists during the summer of 1953. The town hosted the largest convention of Colorado Lions' Club members to date during the month of June. With close to 700 members attending the club's 35th annual convention, this event was the largest of its kind held in Steamboat thus far.² Over 700 visitors to the valley had stopped at the Steamboat Chamber office by the end of July 1953, 300 of those over the 4th of July, and even more were expected before the end of the summer. Rodeo events, softball games, dances, and other attractions all were a summer-time draw for Steamboat at that time. Local businessmen remodeled or spruced up their storefronts, and many new neon signs drew the eye of the visitors.³ (See Addendum 1.)

Accommodating this gradual resurgence of visitors to the Yampa Valley, several hotels, motels, and tourist courts were built and/or remodeled. The Harbor Hotel on 7th and Lincoln opened in 1940, and in 1947 added a second story.⁴ The Western Lodge, built in 1947 at the west end of town, was expanding in the 1950s, constructing a new 3-unit rental addition in 1953.⁵ The Bristol Hotel underwent extensive renovation, finished off by a fresh coat of light green paint, and adding a bright yellow-striped canopy in front by May 1953.⁶ The Nite's Rest Motel, a member of the Best Western Motel association, was built in 1946,⁷ expanded in 1949, and remodeled in the spring and summer of 1953. During the remodel, the Nite's Rest added on the unique feature of a "drive-in" office or lobby. An 18' X 28' aluminum-faced canopy, supported by triangular-shaped steel fans, complete with indirect lighting and recessed fixtures underneath, extended from the motel office to the curb.⁸ (See Addendums 2 and 3.)

¹ Historic Context of Routt County (Boulder: Winter & Company, 1994) 8-1.

Tread of Pioneers Museum, The Historical Guide to Routt County (Denver: Frederick Printing, 1979) 67.

² "Steamboat Springs Host To Largest Convention of Colorado Lions," Steamboat Pilot 4 June 1953: 1.

³ "Steamboat Springs Draws Record Number Of Visitors This Year As Many Attractions Are Publicized," Steamboat Pilot 23 July 1953: 1.

⁴ Dee Richards, Steamboat Round the Bend (Steamboat Springs: The Steamboat Pilot 1976) 48.

⁵ "Western Lodge Gets New 3-Unit Rental Addition," Steamboat Pilot 28 May 1953: 1.

⁶ "Bristol Hotel Has New Look," Steamboat Pilot 21 May 1953: n.p.

⁷ Steamboat Pilot 18 June 1953: 1.

⁸ "Far Reaching Service To Travelers Enjoyed At Nite's Rest Motel Here," Steamboat Pilot 4 June 1953: 10.

It was on March 20, 1953, that H. L. and Evelyn L. Beswick, formerly from Kansas City, MO, were able to purchase several lots at the east end of Steamboat in order to build their own tourist court.⁹ The Beswicks had passed through Steamboat on several occasions and decided they would like to own and manage a motel in the area. Building the motel over the course of the summer, the Beswicks were joined by Evelyn's sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Leon D. Faler, who came to help Evelyn maintain and manage the motel. Opening during the first weekend in September 1953, Steamboat's latest tourist court featured 20 units constructed in red brick with green and yellow trim. And the crowning glory, the "eye catcher" for the prospective tourist, was a large neon sign with a rabbit face topping a large arrow. Painted in colors that matched the new motel,¹⁰ the friendly rabbit caught the eye, while chase lights outlining the large arrow beneath pointed the way to the establishment. (See Addendum 4.) The Beswicks owned the signage and motel for almost 20 years, selling the property in the spring of 1962. The property had various owners until the spring of 1971, when Ronald G. and Lyle F. Koehler purchased the property.¹¹ Ronald Koehler was a businessman in Butte, MT, owning Ron's Gambles' and Marine Store for many years and first came through Steamboat Springs while visiting his son's family in Craig.¹² The Rabbit Ears Motel and sign has been owned by the Koehler Family since the early 1970s.

The Rabbit Ears Motel sign we see today is a product of an interesting evolution. Originally painted red, green, and yellow,¹³ it was a rusty, reddish pink with blue background in the early 1970s, and florescent pink, yellow and blue after that.¹⁴ When Brad Kindred did a major restoration of the sign in 1988, stripping it down to bare metal, patching it with fiberglass where necessary, replacing transformers, re-pumping or replacing the glass as needed for the neon, he also toned the colors back to its present-day pink with beige-yellow background.¹⁵ Although the original sign did not have a marquee, a yellow corrugated plastic one with black lettering was in place by the time the Koehlers' purchased the property in the early 1970s.¹⁶ This was replaced with stained glass by Brad Kindred in 1988,¹⁷ and the current blue marquee has been in place since c. 2000-2001 when the sign was re-skinned in aluminum because paint would no longer adhere to the original galvanized steel.¹⁸

Although the sign retains the neon lights in place during the 1950s, much of the animation originally featured is gone. The eyes of the rabbit were flashing neon, creating the effect that the rabbit was looking from right to left, and utilized an ingenious mechanism that allowed the two

⁹ "New Rabbit Ears Motel Plans To Open This Week," Steamboat Pilot 3 Sept., 1953: 10.

Routt County Assessor's Office, Property Ownership Book: Steamboat Springs, Original Addition, First Addition, and A-C and Subdivisions E-K, n.p.

¹⁰ "New Rabbit Ears Motel Plans To Open This Week," Steamboat Pilot 3 Sept., 1953: 10.

¹¹ Routt County Assessor's Office, Property Ownership Book: Steamboat Springs, Original Addition, First Addition, and A-C and Subdivisions E-K, n.p.

¹² Ronald G. Koehler, personal interview, 17 March 2003.

¹³ "New Rabbit Ears Motel Plans To Open This Week," Steamboat Pilot 3 Sept., 1953: 10.

¹⁴ Greg Koehler, personal interview, 28 April 2003.

¹⁵ Brad Kindred, personal interview, 28 April 2003.

¹⁶ Greg Koehler, personal interview, 28 April 2003.

¹⁷ Brad Kindred, personal interview, 28 April 2003.

¹⁸ Greg Koehler, personal interview, 28 April 2003.

sets of switches used to be turned on and off simultaneously.¹⁹ The arrow was also bordered by blue chase lights that flashed. Both the roving eyes and flashing chase lights were removed in the later 1970s with the Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) law stating that animation was not allowed along State highways.²⁰ In 1977—1978, Highway 40 was widened into a four-lane road in front of the motel, and CDOT condemned the roadside frontage. Located on the condemned frontage of Lot 2 (Block 24, Original Town of Steamboat Springs, CO) of the property, the sign was situated close to or in what is now part of the outermost south-bound lane of the highway as it exists today. The Koehlers then had quite the legal battle on their hands in order to preserve the sign. Eventually, the sign was relocated back and over onto Lot 3 of the property, and remains there today.²¹

Criteria of Significance

The Rabbit Ears Motel sign is being requested for designation to the local Routt County Register of Historic Properties under nominating Criteria A, D, F, and J. As a structure, the sign could qualify for nomination to the Routt County Register of Historic Properties under Criteria A and D because it reflects the character and economics of tourism development in Routt County during the mid-1900s. Unfortunately, the architect of the sign is not known; however, the sign could qualify for nomination under Criterion F because, with its neon lighting and large stature, the sign embodies the architectural characteristics of the desert motels and signage built in New Mexico and Nevada during the modernistic 1950s. Although the sign has been necessarily modified to keep in compliance with State and City codes in the past few decades, review of historic photographs indicates that it still retains its original structural integrity, and still catches the eye of tourist and local alike, located at what used to be the southeastern edge of town. Thus, the sign would also qualify for nomination under Criterion J. Furthermore, although Steamboat Springs during the 1950s featured several neon signs, typifying the modernistic look prevalent during the post-World War II decade, The Rabbit Ears Motel sign is the only one of its kind left in town, adding to its uniqueness as a visual feature in Steamboat Springs and Routt County.

Non-Contributing Structures

The Rabbit Ears Motel property includes several buildings that are used for hostelry. None of these buildings, located on the other lots owned by the Koehler Family in Block 24, Original Town of Steamboat Springs, or the Koehler Subdivision, Lot 1, Steamboat Springs, CO (see Ownership History), are requested for consideration for nomination to the Routt County Register of Historic Properties with this application.

¹⁹ Greg Koehler, personal interview, 17 March 2003.

Greg Koehler, personal interview, 28 April 2003.

²⁰ Greg Koehler, personal interview, 28 April 2003.

²¹ Ronald G. Koehler, personal interview, 17 March 2003.

Greg Koehler, personal interview, 23 May 2003.

Works Cited

- "Bristol Hotel Has New Look." Steamboat Pilot. 28 May 1953: 1.
- "Far Reaching Service To Travelers Enjoyed At Nite's Rest Motel Here." Steamboat Pilot. 4 June 1953: 10.
- Historic Context of Routt County. Boulder: Winter & Company, 1994.
- Kindred, Brad. Personal interview. 28 April 2003.
- Koehler, Greg. Personal interview. 17 March 2003.
- . Personal interview. 28 April 2003.
- . Personal interview. 23 May 2003.
- Koehler, Ronald G. Personal interview. 17 March 2003.
- "New Rabbit Ears Motel Plans To Open This Week." Steamboat Pilot. 3 Sept. 1953: 10.
- Richards, Dee. Steamboat Round the Bend. Steamboat Springs: Steamboat Pilot, 1976.
- Routt County Assessor's Office. Property Ownership Book, Steamboat Springs, Original Addition, First Addition, and A - C.
- Routt County Assessor's Office. Property Ownership Book, Subdivisions E - K.
Steamboat Pilot. 18 June 1953: 1.
- "Steamboat Springs Draws Record Number Of Visitors This Year As Many Attractions Are Publicized." Steamboat Pilot. 23 July 1953: 1.
- "Steamboat Springs Host To Largest Convention of Colorado Lions." Steamboat Pilot. 4 June 1953: 1.
- Tread of Pioneers Museum. The Historical Guide to Routt County. Denver: Frederick Printing, 1979.
- "Western Lodge Gets New 3-Unit Rental Addition." Steamboat Pilot. 28 May 1953: 1.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Rabbit Ears Motel Sign is a large sign, with the main body measuring 17' 6" wide by 8' 1"—9'tall at the top of the arrow. The rabbit itself is 7' 6" tall from the base of the face to the tip of the ears. The sides of the sign are narrow, measuring 14 ½" wide. The sign sits on two thick metal posts that are a little less than 3' (2' 10") tall. Originally constructed with galvanized metal, the motel sign was re-skinned in an aluminum sheath c. 2000-2001. Total surface area of the sign is approximately 780 sq. ft. The two steel posts that support the sign are bordered with landscape timbers forming a rectangle at the base. The west edge of the sign holds the power box operating the sign.

The rabbit face on the upper edge of the sign is painted white with black facial features, and the background of the rest of the sign is painted yellow-beige. The arrow pointing into the motel's parking lot is painted pink. The words, "Rabbit Ears" is painted in black upon the beige background, while the word "Motel" is placed upon the arrow directly below in contrasting white. An 8'W X 19"H X 1 ½"D rectangular blue marquee, framed on all edges in metal, is placed beneath the top portion of the arrow as further advertisement, featuring a sandstone rock scene done in darker, reddish beige, and the words "Quality Lodging at Affordable Rates, Family Owned and Operated" in white. Beneath the bottom of the pink arrow is the 6'6"W X 10'H X 4 ¼"D "Vacancy" sign that is also framed in metal and encased in glass. To the left of, and beneath, the rabbit face is a short (44") horizontal pole attaching a rectangular 24"W X 26"H metal "AAA" sign to the main structure.

Neon tubes border the edges of the rabbit face, and glow pink when the lights are turned on. The eyes of the rabbit are outlined with neon tubes that glow orange. The words "Rabbit Ears" are overlaid with neon tubes that are orange when turned on, and the word "Motel" is bordered with green neon lights. The "Vacancy" sign is highlighted by orange neon, and is lit separately from the rest of the signage. The marquee is back lighted at nighttime, but has no neon lighting. Empty 5/8"-deep sockets border the edges of the arrow in the sign, replicating the sockets that held blue 40-watt chase lights outlining the arrow until the mid- to late-1970s.

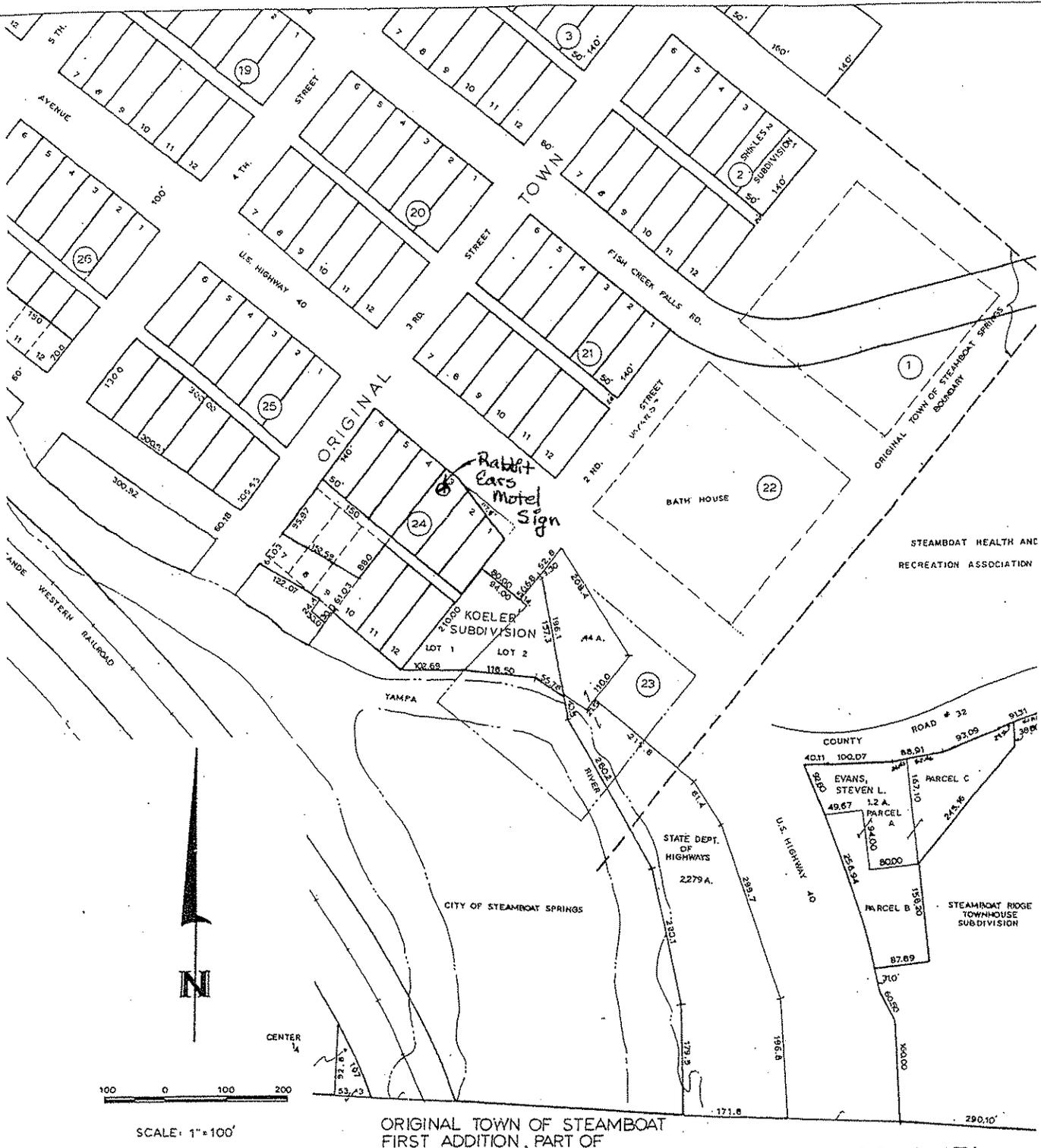
Historically, the neon-outlined eyes of the rabbit were mechanized, creating the effect of the eyes moving from left to right. As noted above, blue chase lights outlined the borders of the arrow as well, but both the animated eyes and chase lights were no longer allowed after the mid- to late-1970s passage of the Colorado Department of Transportation's ((CDOT) law prohibiting animation along State highways.

The space where the present-day marquee is currently located was actually open when the sign was originally built. A corrugated yellow marquee with black lettering was inserted at some point in time prior to 1971. This marquee was changed to one of stained glass c. 1988, and the present-day blue marquee was added c. 2000-2001.

The original colors of the sign were red, green and yellow. This was changed to a rusty, reddish pink and blue prior to 1971, and florescent pink, yellow and blue until 1988 when the present yellow-beige background, pink arrow, and white rabbit face were used.

Originally located on the frontage portion of Lot 2, Block 24, of the Original Town of Steamboat Springs, CO, the sign was moved to its present-day location on Lot 3, Block 24 c. 1977-1978 to compensate for the widening of Highway 40 during that time.

MAPS



SCALE: 1" = 100'

ORIGINAL TOWN OF STEAMBOAT
FIRST ADDITION, PART OF

0841-171
T6N, R84W
SEC. 17, NE 1/4

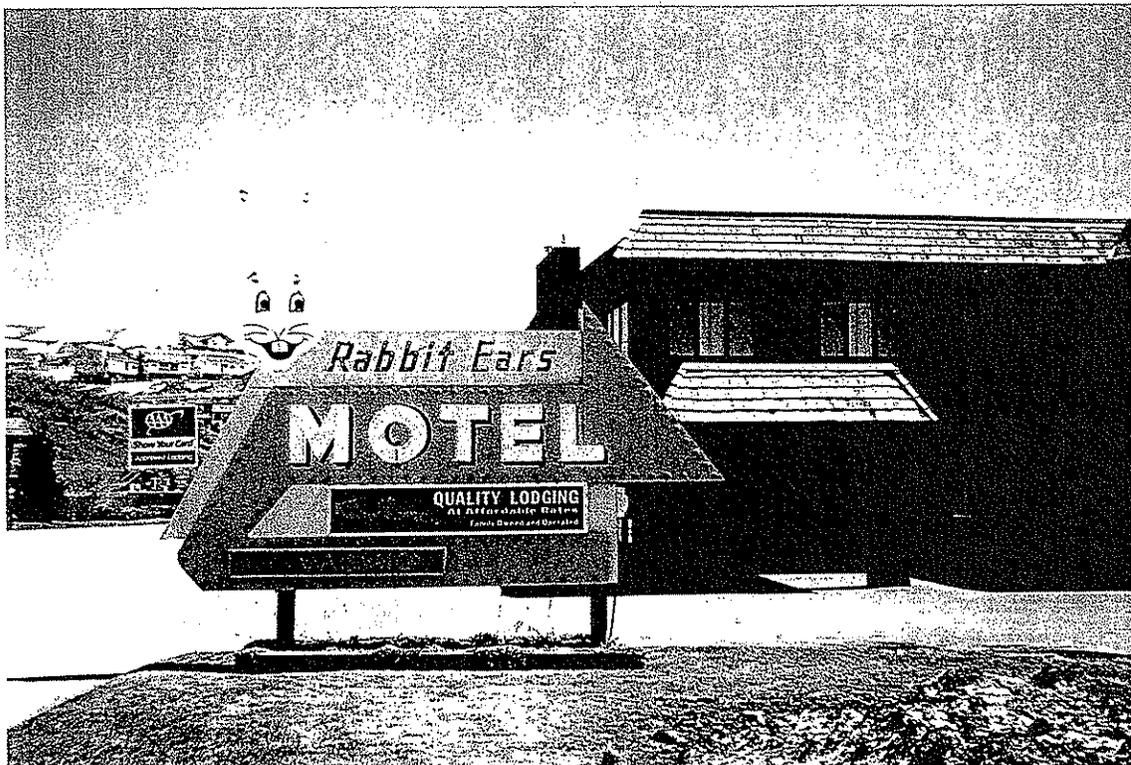
Map 2. Location and orientation c. 2003 of the Rabbit Ears Motel Sign on Lot 3, Block 24, Original Town of Steamboat Springs, CO. After Plat Map courtesy of the Routt County Assessor's Office, Steamboat Springs, CO, 1 Dec., 1987.

PHOTOGRAPHS

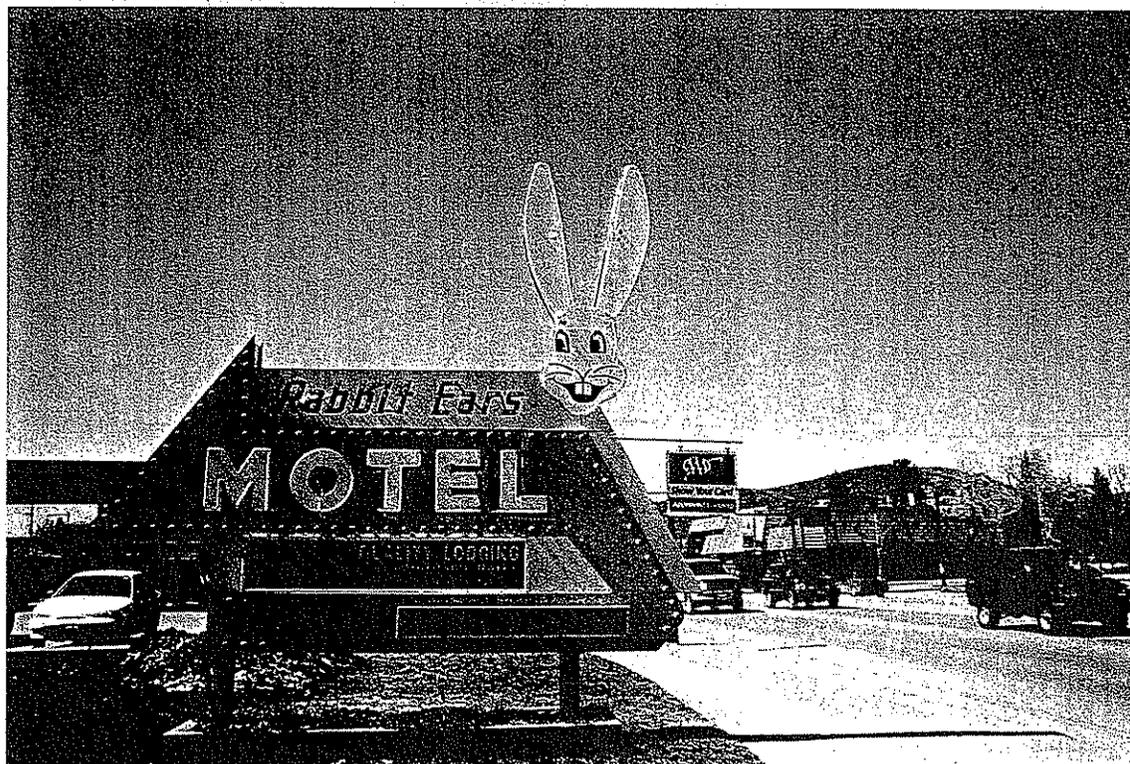


Beckoning travel weary visitors is this unique motel sign at the east edge of Steamboat. The new sign for the Rabbit Ears motel is bright green and dark red trimmed in yellow. Its large size catches the eye of many passers-by.

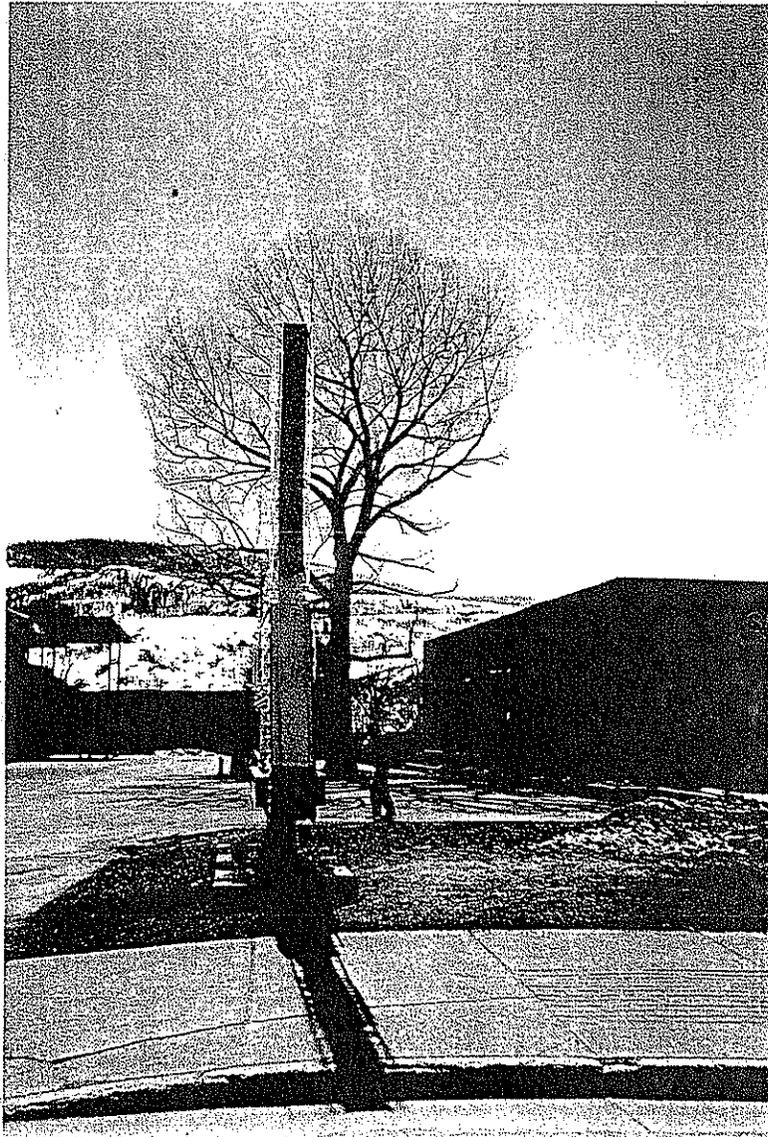
Photograph 1. Historic Photograph. Rabbit Ears Motel Sign, c. 1953. "New Rabbit Ears Motel Plans To Open This Week." Steamboat Pilot. 3 Sept. 1953: 10.



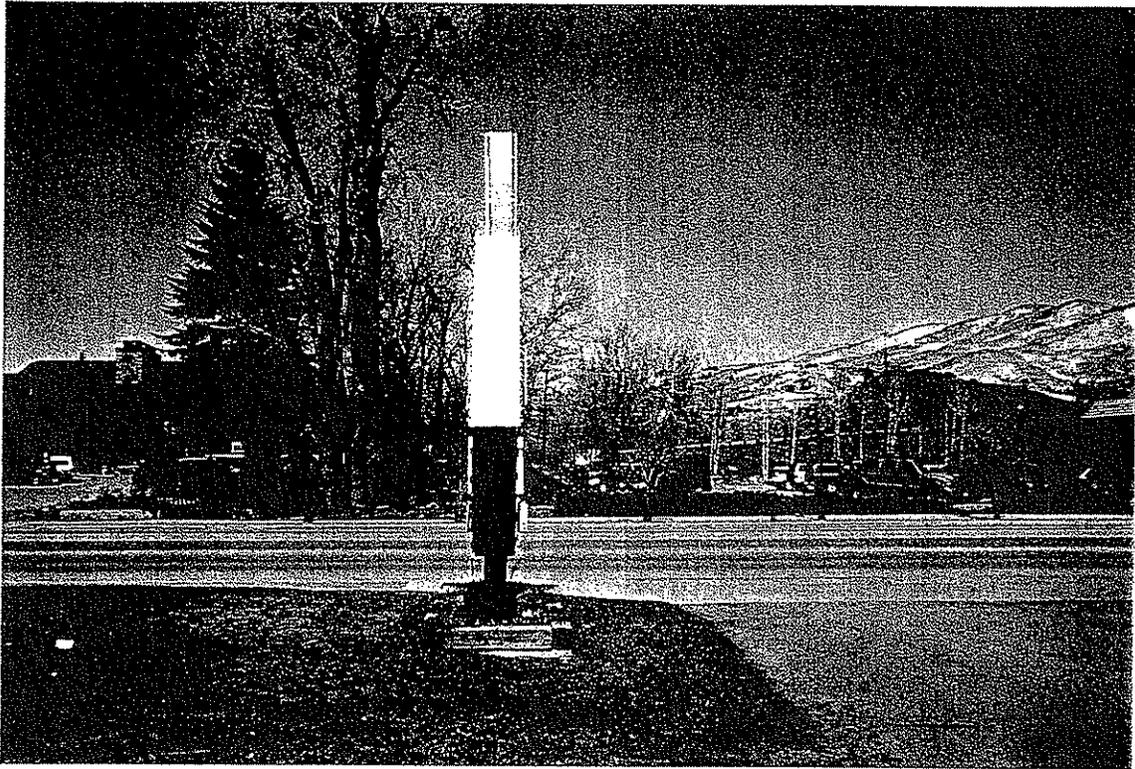
Photograph 2. Rabbit Ears Motel Sign, c. 2003. Camera facing southeast.



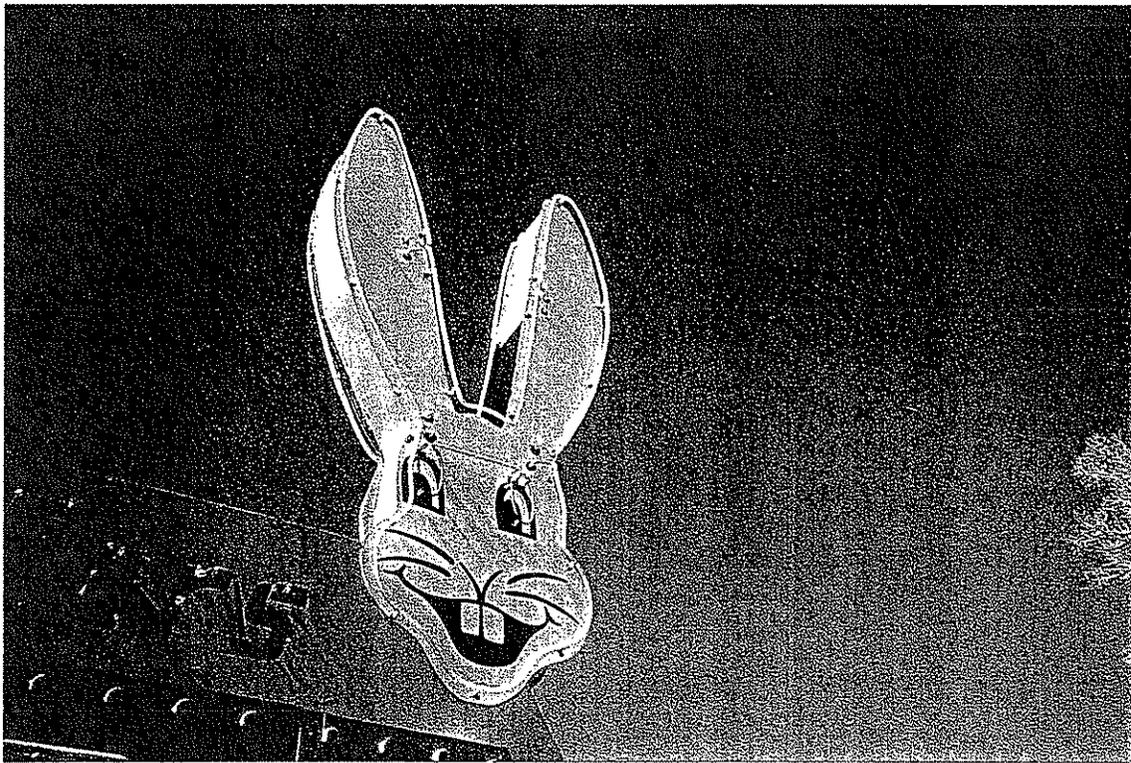
Photograph 3. Rabbit Ears Motel Sign, c. 2003. Camera facing northwest.



Photograph 4. Rabbit Ears Motel Sign, c. 2003. Side of sign.
Camera facing southwest.



Photograph 5. Rabbit Ears Motel Sign, c. 2003. Side of sign.
Camera facing northeast.



Photograph 6. Rabbit Ears Motel Sign, c. 2003. Detail, rabbit face.
Camera facing north.

ADDENDUMS

Steamboat Springs Draws Record Number Of Visitors This Year As Many Attractions Are Publicized

Over 700 So Far Stop At Chamber Office

A record number of visitors has stopped at the Steamboat Chamber office so far this year and the stream of visitors is expected to swell throughout the remainder of the summer season.

Highway 40 travel has been at peak level this year, giving large numbers of tourists their first glimpse of this outstanding area in the Rocky Mountains.

To date over 700 people have stopped in at the local Chamber office to gather information about the Steamboat region, food and lodging facilities, recreation and scenic points of interest.

Over the July 4th week alone, over 300 persons signed the guest registry at that office. This figure is expected to be surpassed over the week end of the Square Dance festival which will take place here on August 3.

Facilities Expanded
Lodging facilities in Steamboat have been expanded to take care of many additional visitors. The new tourist court almost completed at the east end of Steamboat is expected to be ready for occupancy in August.

The new court is owned by R. L. Reswick of Kansas City Mo., who purchased the site from the town. Contractor for the job is E. S. Carlson, owner of a construction company in Denver.

Mr. and Mrs. Ted Larson, owners of the Western Lodge at the west end of Steamboat on Highway 40, recently completed the addition of several rental units to their court.

Two new super service stations will be constructed soon. They will be put up by the Phillips Petroleum company and by Standard Oil company.

Several of the town's businessmen have done remodeling work on their

stores and many new attractive neon signs have gone up.

Information Booth

The unique stage coach information booth has drawn much comment from summer visitors. It is a feature in the evening by collectors from the various organizations in Steamboat and these workers have on hand pamphlets and information concerning tourist attractions in the area.

Also for the convenience of visitors is the rest room lounge on Lincoln avenue maintained by local home demonstration clubs with financial assistance from other organizations.

In other ways too more comfort to visitors has been assured. The dust binder project seems to be working out very well and has greatly eliminated dust in Steamboat. This project was instigated by Mayor R. H. Hubbard and is paid for by Steamboat property owners.

Softball Program

An added recreation this summer which has drawn many visitors as well as local citizenry is the newly organized softball program. Double headers are played on the local diamond every Tuesday and Friday night, weather permitting. Softball has become a very popular sport here and there is much interest on the part of players and spectators alike. Jim Dodson of Boys Market was the main spring behind organization of the Steamboat league.

In addition there are outdoor band concerts every Friday night near the court house and children's square dances on Wednesday evenings at the tennis courts. The Steamboat hot mineral water swimming pools are a favorite gathering place for tourists and locals. The pools are open daily from 9 a. m. until 9 p. m. under management of Hoyt Shaw. Registered fire guards are on duty at all times.

Roads to popular scenic spots and well stocked fishing areas have undergone a good deal of repair work to put them in top condition. They afford the traveler access to some of the best fishing streams and lakes in the country, also giving him close up views of beautiful mountain scenery.

There are eating and sleeping accommodations at many of the more popular fishing spots in the vicinity.

Many Dances

In Steamboat and nearby communities there are dances almost every Saturday night. This evening Verne Byers, popular name band, will play at the Legionaire under sponsorship of the American Legion, Lee Hill Post 44. The Legion sponsors many Saturday night dances with Billy Bunkle orchestra at the helm. The local VFW post also puts on a number of dances at their club house in Steamboat. Steamboat Springs is rapidly becoming rated as a top tourist mecca in Colorado and as tourist travel increases the many worthwhile attractions here will be even further advertised through the nation.

Addendum 1. "Steamboat Springs Draws Record Number Of Visitors This Year As Many Attractions Are Publicized." Steamboat Pilot. 23 July 1953: 1.

**Bristol Hotel
Has New Look**

A bright yellow-striped canopy was put up Sunday at the entrance to the Bristol hotel in Steamboat Springs. The hotel has undergone extensive remodeling since purchased last September by Mr. and Mrs. Harold Kilham, formerly of Moline, Ill.

The exterior of the building has been repainted a light green while the interior has been redecorated and several of the rooms furnished in new color schemes.

The big awning at the entrance was put up by the Colorado Tent and Awning company of Denver.

Addendum 2. "Bristol Hotel Has New Look." Steamboat Pilot. 21 May 1953: 1.

Far Reaching Service To Travelers Enjoyed At Nite's Rest Motel Here

Noted Court Undergoes Much Remodeling This Year



The big drive-in lobby just recently completed at Nite's Rest extends from the office to the street curb. The aluminum faced canopy is patterned after

now desert motels found in New Mexico and Nevada. It has indirect lighting on the underside for the convenience of motorists.

Service to travel-weary motorists is not just a one-stop business at Nite's Rest motel in Steamboat Springs. It can and does extend thousands of miles away and several weeks in the future.

As a member of "The Best Western Motels" Nite's Rest can make reservations right here in Steamboat for the finest motel accommodations elsewhere in the United States. If a tourist desires, while in Steamboat he may get reservations made elsewhere and at any time in the future, with the assurance that his rooms will be held for him regardless of what time he reaches his destination.

This is a unique service of Nite's Rest, the only motel in the area where reservations may be made on this basis.

Last summer over 15,000 tourists took advantage of the fine accommodations and many services offered by Owners Basil Hallquist and Harry Trinder at Nite's Rest. The local court is one of the best in Colorado and has maintained a high standard of service since it was built seven years ago.

Much Remodeling

In 1949 the motel was expanded and this spring over \$10,000 is being spent in remodeling and re-energizing. An entirely new feature, just recently completed, is the drive-in office or lobby, patterned after several new desert motels in Las Vegas, New and Roswell, N.

This unique structure is a large canopy which extends from Nite's Rest office to the curb and has indirect lighting with recessed fixtures underneath. The 28 by 22-ft. canopy is faced with aluminum and supported by modernistically styled steel fans which are triangular shaped.

All of the 26 units at Nite's Rest have been repainted and redecorated this year. Basil Hallquist, resident owner reports the installation of new Simmons furniture and new luggage racks in the rooms. Beds have been newly tiled and new Air-Room mattresses have been added, along with colorful new draperies.

Ships Cabin Design

Under the guidance of an experienced architect, the lobby canopy structure has been made of aluminum and is supported by 12 steel fans. The two bells extend from the canopy to the curb and are illuminated by new three-way lamps. Many different types of units can be found at this up-to-date court. Unit cases include four large units containing three beds and

to travelers for the past several summer seasons.

Can Accommodate 80 The lodge can accommodate 80 people at a time when operating in full swing and business is at its best from May to November, although business is good all year around, Mr. Hallquist stated.

Nite's Rest is a member of the Best Western Motel association which offers the unique reservation in advance service and of the Rocky Mountain American Automobile association.

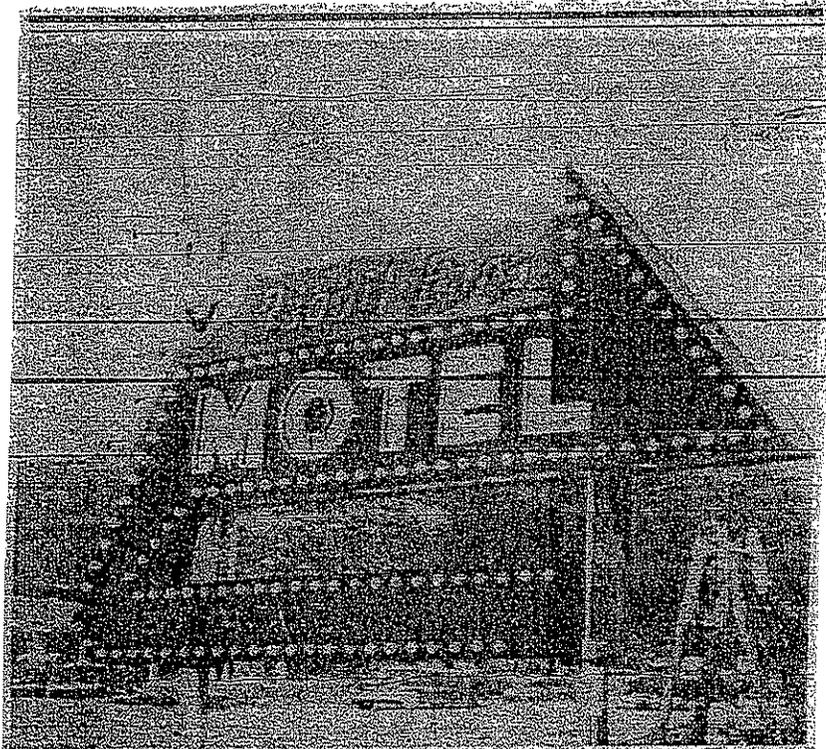
"Best Western" is affiliated with Quality Courts, a similar association which is in force east of the Mississippi river. In this manner, the guaranteed reservation service extends across the country. The two associations publish travel guides which list motels all over the nation and are free.

There is one Best Western motel in every small town and two in each city over 100,000 population. The service has been going for about five years and two years ago, at initiation, Nite's Rest became a member of the association. A high standard of accommodation and service must be maintained by all of the member motels. Periodically these motels are inspected for this purpose.

Do Consultant Work Mr. Hallquist and Mr. Trinder are well versed in motel management. They have done much consultant work on motels elsewhere and their plans have been copy righted. They have built motels in Durango, Colo., and Roswell, N. Mex. and have done consultant work for a motel at Prescott, Ariz.

The two have been partners since 1946. Mr. Hallquist is a resident of Steamboat and has lived here much of his life. He and Mrs. Hallquist reside at Nite's Rest.

Mr. Trinder is a former Steamboat resident and his parents constructed the old hospital which is now the school building. Mr. Trinder's father help lay out some of the original streets in Steamboat and Trinder resides in Denver.



Beckoning travel weary visitors is this unique metal sign at the east edge of Steamboat. The new sign for the Rabbit Ears motel is bright green and dark red trimmed in yellow. Its large size catches the eye of auto passers by.

New Rabbit Ears Motel Plans To Open This Week

Planning to open this week and is the new Rabbit Ears motel on Highway 46 at the east edge of Steamboat. Recently a clever "rabbit ears" neon sign was erected at the modernistic court that has drawn comments from local citizens and visitors alike.

The 20-unit court, finished in red brick with green and yellow trim, is owned by H. L. Beswick, formerly of Kansas City, Mo. Mrs. Beswick will manage the units which will be kept open during the winter months. She is residing at the manager's quarters at the front of the building which is modernistically encased in dark stained wood.

Also here are Mr. and Mrs. Leon D. Faler, formerly of Kansas City, Mo. Mr. Faler is in charge of maintenance of the new court and Mrs. Faler and Mrs. Beswick are sisters. They reside at the motel.

Mr. Beswick had passed thru Steamboat on several occasions and decided he would like to own a tourist court here. It took several years before the plans could be completed for locating here.

All the units in the new motel are attractively furnished in bright colors and all modern fixtures.

COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES NOMINATION FORM

SECTION I

Name of Property

Historic Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

Other Names _____

Address of Property

address not for publication

Street Address 201 Lincoln Avenue

City Steamboat Springs County Routt Zip 80487

Present Owner of Property

(for multiple ownership, list the names and addresses of each owner on one or more continuation sheets)

Name Rabbit Ears Motel, Inc. (contact: Greg Koehler)

Address PO Box 770573 Phone 970-879-1150

City Steamboat Springs State CO Zip 80477

Owner Consent for Nomination

(attach signed consent from each owner of property - see attached form)

Preparer of Nomination

Name Laureen Schaffer (edited by Dale Heckendorn) Date May 22, 2006

Organization City of Steamboat Springs

Address PO Box 775088 Phone 970-871-8278

City Steamboat Springs State CO Zip 80477

<p>FOR OFFICIAL USE:</p> <p>_____ Nomination Received</p> <p>_____ Review Board Recommendation ___ Approval ___ Denial</p>	<p>Site Number <u>5RT</u></p> <p>Senate # _____ House # _____</p> <p>_____ CHS Board State Register Listing ___ Approved ___ Denied</p>
<p>Certification of Listing: President, Colorado Historical Society Date _____</p>	

COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

SECTION II

Local Historic Designation

Has the property received local historic designation?

no

yes --- individually designated designated as part of a historic district

Date designated July 2003

Designated by Routt County (Name of municipality or county)

Use of Property

Historic Commerce

Current Commerce

Original Owner H.L. and Evelyn L. Beswick

Source of Information Steamboat Pilot, September 3, 1953

Year of Construction 1953

Source of Information Steamboat Pilot, September 3, 1953

Architect, Builder, Engineer, Artist or Designer Unknown

Source of Information _____

Locational Status

Original location of structure(s)

Structure(s) moved to current location

Date of move 1977-1978

SECTION III

Description and Alterations

(describe the current and original appearance of the property and any alterations on one or more continuation sheets)

COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

SECTION IV

Significance of Property

Nomination Criteria

- A** - property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to history
- B** - property is connected with persons significant in history
- C** - property has distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction or artisan
- D** - property is of geographic importance
- E** - property contains the possibility of important discoveries related to prehistory or history

Areas of Significance

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Economics | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment/ Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Heritage | <input type="checkbox"/> Military |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Exploration/ Settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> Performing Arts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Geography/ Community Identity | <input type="checkbox"/> Politics/ Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Planning and Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Health/Medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Social History |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |

Significance Statement

(explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Bibliography

(cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

SECTION V

Locational Information

Lot(s) 3 Block 24 Addition Original Town of Steamboat Springs

USGS Topographic Quad Map Steamboat Springs

Verbal Boundary Description of Nominated Property

(describe the boundaries of the nominated property on a continuation sheet)

COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

SECTION VI

Photograph Log for Black and White Photographs

(prepare a photograph log on one or more continuation sheets)

SECTION VII

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS TO ACCOMPANY NOMINATION

Owner Consent Form

Black and White Photographs

Color Prints or Digital Images

Sketch Map(s)

Photocopy of USGS Map Section

Optional Materials

Use of Nomination Materials

Upon submission to the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, all nomination forms and supporting materials become public records pursuant to CRS Title 24, and may be accessed, copied, and used for personal or commercial purposes in accordance with state law unless otherwise specifically exempted. The Colorado Historical Society may reproduce, publish, display, perform, prepare derivative works or otherwise use the nomination materials for Society and/or State Register purposes.

For Office Use Only

Property Type: building(s) district site structure object area

Architectural Style/Engineering Type: Outdoor Electric Advertising Sign

Period of Significance: 1953

Level of Significance: Local State National

Acreage less than one

P.M. _____ Township _____ Range _____ Section _____ Quarter Sections _____

UTM Reference: Zone _____ Easting _____ Northing _____ NAD27

Site Elevation: _____ feet

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

DESCRIPTION and ALTERATIONS

Located at the southeastern gateway to the city of Steamboat Springs, the Rabbit Ears Motel Sign has been greeting residents and visitors along U.S. Highway 40 since 1953. The Rabbit Ears Motel is located to the south of the sign. The Yampa River flows directly behind the motel, to the south and west. The famous mineral springs of the Steamboat Springs Health and Recreation Association are located across US 40 (Lincoln Avenue). The sign is one of the first built objects encountered by those entering the original commercial area of Steamboat Springs after having descended from Rabbit Ears Pass.

The motel sign is a freestanding, double-sided, roadside advertising sign. The main body measures 17' 6" wide by 9' tall at the top of the arrow. The painted rabbit head is 7' 6" tall from the chin to the tip of the ears. The edges of the sign measure 14½" deep. Thin aluminum sheets form the sign's skin. The total surface area is approximately 780 sq. ft. The west edge of the sign holds the sign electrical power box. The sign rests on two thick metal posts that rise 2' 10" from grade. Landscape timbers create a rectangular base around the two steel support posts.

The rabbit face on the upper edge of the sign is painted white with black facial features. The sign background is painted yellow-beige. The U-shaped arrow pointing into the motel's parking lot is painted pink. The painted words "Rabbit Ears" are in black on the beige background, while the word "Motel" is painted directly below on the arrow in contrasting white. An 8'W X 19"H X 1½"D rectangular, metal-framed blue marquee occupies the area beneath the top portion of the arrow. The marquee contains a sandstone rock scene done in dark, reddish beige, and the words "Quality Lodging at Affordable Rates, Family Owned and Operated" in white. The lower portion of the arrow contains the 6'6"W X 10"H X 4¼"D "Vacancy" sign that is also framed in metal and encased in glass. Attached to sign edge facing the road and just beneath the rabbit face is a short (44") horizontal pole supporting a rectangular 24"W X 26"H metal "AAA" sign.

Neon tubes border the edges of the rabbit's face and glow pink when illuminated.¹ The rabbit's eyes are outlined with neon tubes that glow orange. Orange-glowing tubes outline the words "Rabbit Ears." The word "Motel" is bordered with green neon lights. The "Vacancy" sign is highlighted by orange neon and is lit separately from the rest of the sign. The marquee is backlighted without neon tubes. Empty 5/8"-deep sockets border the edges of the arrow, replicating the sockets that originally held blue 40-watt chase lights outlining the arrow.

¹ *Neon* is the generic term descriptive of the entire spectrum of glowing tubes used in electrical signage. Such signs generally use a variety of inert gases to produce different colors. When excited electrically, neon glows a bright orange-red. Argon glows a bright grayish-blue. Bright blue results when mercury is added to argon. The same mixture placed behind a yellow rather than clear glass yields a green light. A white glow is created using helium, and yellow is obtained with helium under yellow glass.

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign



Figure 1. This postcard postmarked in 1962 shows the Rabbit Ears Motel sign and building before the end of their first decade of operation.

Alterations

Changes to the sign occurred over its half-decade history because of general maintenance and upgrades, new sign regulations, and highway widening. Originally, the neon-outlined eyes of the rabbit were mechanized, creating the effect of the eyes moving from left to right. Forty-watt blue chase lights outlining the borders of the arrow provided additional nighttime animation. Both the animated eyes and chase lights were prohibited after the 1970s passage of legislation prohibiting animated signs along roads in the State highway system.

The space where the present-day marquee is currently located was actually open when the sign was originally built. A corrugated yellow marquee with black lettering was inserted by the time the Koehler family purchased the property in the early 1970s. Brad Kindred replaced the yellow marquee with stained glass in 1988. The current blue marquee has been in place since 2000-2001.

The original colors of the sign were red (arrow), green (background), yellow ("Rabbit Ears"), and white ("Motel" and rabbit face). This was changed to a rusty, reddish pink and blue prior to 1971. The sign wore florescent pink, yellow and blue until 1988. (Postcard, 1962; McPherson, 2003)

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

Brad Kindred completed a major restoration of the sign in 1988, stripping it down to bare metal, patching it with fiberglass where necessary, replacing transformers, and re-pumping or replacing the glass as needed for the neon. He also toned the colors to their present-day pink with beige-yellow background. In 2000-2001 the sign was re-faced in aluminum and repainted because paint would no longer adhere to the original galvanized steel (McPherson, 2003).

In 1977-1978, the Colorado Department of Highways widened US 40 into a four-lane road in front of the motel, necessitating the condemnation of the roadside frontage. Located on the condemned area, the sign was situated close to or in what is now part of the outermost southbound lane of the highway. The Koehlers tried unsuccessfully to preserve the sign in its original location. By 1978 the sign stood in its current location on the motel property (McPherson, 2003).

Historic Integrity

The Rabbit Ears Motel sign has changed over time, though the overall shape remains intact. The infilling of the open portion of the U-shaped arrow is the only noticeable change to the sign's form. General maintenance necessitated repainting and the repair of lighting elements. As a feature of the day and night, the sign's integrity needs to be accessed in both daylight and after dark environments.



At least three paint schemes have been used, though it appears that the rabbit head, the single most important aspect of the sign, retains its original paint colors. The change from the bold red, green, yellow and white to the pastels first applied in 1988 and continuing to the present does result in some loss of integrity of design and materials, particularly when the sign is viewed in daylight hours.

Neon tubes were replaced in kind, retaining integrity of design and materials when the sign is viewed at night. The removal of the chaser

lights is most noticeable at night. The attention-catching and eye-directing qualities of the animated arrow border have been lost. Beyond the animation, the arrow now lacks a light-defined edge. Though the arrow remains visible after dark, the infilling of its center opening

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

renders it less defined. However, as is true of the daylight conditions, the single most important nighttime features are the rabbit head, along with the "Rabbit Ears" and "Motel" wording. These remain highly visible in their neon outlining.

The sign also has lost some integrity of location with its 1977-78 move. The relocation was of short distance, less than 100 feet. The sign remains on the land historically part of the motel in 1953. The sign retains its original compass orientation and its orientation to US40. The sign is also approximately the same distance from the shoulder of the widened highway as it was from the highway in 1953. The change in location has minimally affected the sign's ability to convey its significance.

The Rabbit Ears Motel Sign, though somewhat changed since its 1953 construction, retains sufficient integrity to convey its architectural and geographical significance.

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

The Rabbit Ears Motel Sign is a well-recognized, locally significant commercial feature at the southeastern edge of the original Town of Steamboat Springs. The 1953 constructed roadside sign is eligible for listing in the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties under Criterion C in the area of *architecture*. The motel sign typifies the design of outdoor advertising signs used by motels and other roadside merchants from the early postwar period to the implementation of roadside sign regulations in the 1970s.

The sign is also eligible under Criterion D in the area of *geography/community identity*. The motel sign remains an enduring and established visual feature of the community and serves as a source of identity for the community. The large neon sign with its grinning rabbit face marks the entrance to the community. Once considered by some to be a tacky eyesore, the sign survived periods of downtown "modernization" to become a much beloved local geographic landmark. The sign now transcends its traditional role and has become a community icon.

Tourism in Steamboat Springs

Tourism has long played an important role in the economy of Steamboat Springs. The varied amenities of the region, including the hot springs, hunting, skiing, and other opportunities for outdoor recreation have drawn tourists to the region since the early 1900s. The arrival of the railroad in 1909 and the Victory Highway after World War I increased accessibility to the Yampa Valley. The highway was designated U.S. Highway 40 in 1935 after it was reconstructed and open to year-round travel. Twentieth-century tourism waxed and waned with national economic trends, peaking in the 1920s, declining in the 1930s and early 1940s due to the Great Depression and World War II, and increasing again in the late 1940s and 1950s with the postwar economic boom.

Accommodating the resurgence of visitors in the postwar era, local entrepreneurs constructed several hotels, motels, and travel courts. The Harbor Hotel at 7th Street and Lincoln Avenue (U.S. Highway 40) opened in 1940 and business warranted the addition of a second story in 1947. The Western Lodge, constructed in 1947 at the west end of town, expanded in the 1950s. The owners of the Bristol Hotel undertook a renovation project in 1953. The Nite's Rest Motel, built in 1946 and expanded in 1949, underwent remodeling in the spring and summer of 1953. During the remodel, the motel owners added a "drive-in" office, reflective of the automobile tourism age. An 18' by 28' aluminum-faced canopy with indirect lighting extended from the motel office to the curb. The changes modernized the building and were "patterned after new desert motels found in New Mexico and Nevada." Local businessmen remodeled or spruced up their storefronts, and many new neon signs drew the eye of the visitors. Steamboat Springs drew a record number of tourists in 1953 (*Steamboat Pilot*, May 21, June 4, July 23, and September 3, 1953).

In March 1953, H. L. and Evelyn L. Beswick, formerly from Kansas City, Missouri, purchased several lots at the east end of Steamboat Springs from the Town in order to develop their own tourist court. The Beswicks had passed through Steamboat Springs on several occasions and

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

decided they would like to own and manage a motel in the area. Building the motel over the course of the summer, the Beswicks were joined by Evelyn's sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Leon D. Faler, who came to help maintain and manage the motel. Opening during the first weekend in September 1953, Steamboat's latest tourist court featured 20 units constructed by E.S. Carlson of Denver and featured red brick with green and yellow trim. Beckoning tourists, the "eye catcher" for the prospective visitor to the new hotel, was a large neon sign with a grinning rabbit face on top of a large arrow. Painted in colors that matched the new motel, the friendly rabbit caught attention, while chase lights outlining the large arrow beneath pointed the way to the establishment (*Steamboat Pilot*, July 23 and September 3, 1953).

The Beswicks owned the Rabbit Ears Motel for almost ten years, selling the property in the spring of 1962. The property had various owners until the spring of 1971, when Ronald G. and Lyle F. Koehler purchased the property. Ronald Koehler was a businessman in Butte, Montana, owning Ron's Gambles' and Marine Store for many years. He first came through Steamboat Springs while visiting his son's family in Craig. The Koehler family continues to own and operate the Rabbit Ears Motel (Routt County Assessor's Office; McPherson, 2003).

Roadside Advertising

Operators of roadside businesses depend heavily on signs to catch the attention automobile travelers and to motivate them to turn in to purchase the advertised goods and services. The speed of automobile traffic and the general commercial clutter of the roadside afford any one sign only a few seconds to convey its message and stimulate a positive reaction. Merchants and sign designers have long used a variety of techniques to attract the traveling public.

Roadside signs tend to use bold shapes and forms that stand out from the surrounding roadside environment. Outdoor signs often employ arrows or other devices to encourage the eye to move from the sign toward the business itself. Bold colors attract attention as does movement or animation. Simple signs convey their message quicker and more easily than do cluttered signs. Roadside signs tend toward few words, as a motorist has little time to read a long message and small print is difficult to comprehend quickly from a moving vehicle.

Many roadside businesses operate during both daylight hours and after dark. Their signs must be effective both during the day and at night. Bold shapes and colors noticeable in the light fade to obscurity at night. Flood and backlights, neon outlines, and theater marquee-type chaser lights provide signs with distinction, legibility, and animation when viewed after sunset.

Motel operators face the same advertising challenges as other roadside retailers. While some travelers make advance reservations, many rely on being able find an attractive and available motel room by driving by the choices at the end of each day's journey. As these room-seeking travelers generally pass by in late afternoon and early evening, an effective motel sign must be appealing in the daylight and when lighted at night. Postwar motel signs often included bold shapes and colors, distinctive lettering, and eye-catching arrows. Neon outlines and lettering, flashing lights, and chaser lights also were common.

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

Wording was kept to a minimum, often including nothing more than the motel name and the availability of rooms (the ubiquitous "vacancy" "no vacancy" signs). Some signs highlighted desirable amenities. Early signs might note "telephones" or "steam heat," while modern signs announce the availability of spas, Internet access, and cable TV.

The independent motel operator faces a particularly difficult marketing challenge. Chain and franchise operations use identical signs or sign elements at each associated motel. The so-called "Great Sign" of the Holiday Inn chain is a notable example. (See fig. 2) Travelers experiencing a pleasant night's stay at one location would be on the lookout for the chain's standard sign when visiting other towns. The independent motel owner relies on his sign to entice travelers without any prior knowledge of his facilities, and often against the competition of a familiar chain operation just down the road. The sign must convey safety, cleanliness, desirable amenities, and of course, availability. An enticing sign could make the difference between commercial success or failure.



Figure 3. The huge roadside sign designed by Kemmons Wilson for his Holiday Inn chain was distinctive, eye-catching, and immediately recognizable from a considerable distance.

Source: Postcard from the mid-1960s.

Owners strive to select appealing motel names, not just in general terms but specifically for use on the roadside sign. Cute names and distinctive spellings abound, such as Kozy Kort, Doze Inn, and Nite's Rest. Regional geography plays a big role in motel naming. A Coral Court, Palm Tree, or Sands can be found in coastal towns, while the Cowboy, Blue Spruce, or Westward Ho celebrates the western travel experience, and the Cactus, Roadrunner and Oasis signal day's end in towns across the desert southwest. Certain names also lend themselves to distinctive sign shapes or elements. Many Cactus motel signs display the instantly recognizable saguaro, even when hundreds of miles from the native range of this desert dweller.

Motel owners often play on local tourist attractions. What trip to Yellowstone would be complete without a stay en route at a Geyser court or Old Faithful motel? The roadside sign for these tourist lodgings can be counted on to feature an image of their erupting namesake.

The advertising sign installed by the Beswicks at their Rabbit Ears motel incorporates many of the classic elements of the roadside sign. The bold shape and sweeping arrow catch the motorist's attention and direct the eye to the motel building. The simple lettering makes the sign easy to read from a moving car. However, it is the relationship between the name and the design that gives this sign its major appeal. Travelers coming west toward Steamboat on U.S.

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

Highway 40 first surmount the summit of 9,426-foot Rabbit Ears Pass before dropping into the Yampa Valley. As motorists on the mountain highway enter Steamboat Springs, a friendly reminder of their recent automotive triumph greets them—the smiling rabbit's face on the sign at the Rabbit Ears Motel. The giant rabbit head topped by a massive pair of ears employs humor to cement the bond between motorist and sign. Who could pass by without a chuckle. Better yet, who could resist the children's pleas to stay the night? For countless families, the sign at the Rabbit Ears Motel stimulated an affirmative answer to that universal question, Are we there yet?

Community Identity

Many physical elements, both natural and human-made, contribute to a community's identity. Prominent buildings and sites unique to an area differentiate it from other communities. Often, the elements that provide this identity were designed for other purposes. Their long association with a place and a community can give them geographical importance unrelated to their original design and use. The Rabbit Ears Motel Sign is such a feature.

Though designed strictly as a roadside marketing devise, its long association with the community, its place as a gateway marker in the landscape, its reference to a local geographical landmark by name and design, and its overall distinctiveness reinforced by its unforgettable humor, have made this advertising sign an icon. It supplies Steamboat Springs with part of its identity, both for residents and repeat visitors. Over more than half-century of service, the sign at the Rabbit Ears Motel signaled ones arrival in Steamboat Springs. The historic sign's survival in the changing physical landscape provides a visual anchor for the southeastern entry to the downtown area.

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Bristol Hotel Has New Look," *Steamboat Pilot*, 21 May 1953: 1.

Colorado Cultural Resource Survey, "Historic Property Survey of Downtown Steamboat Springs, Routt County, Colorado, 5RT-1008." 1996.

"Far Reaching Service To Travelers Enjoyed At Nite's Rest Motel Here," *Steamboat Pilot*, 4 June 1953: 10.

Historic Context of Routt County. Boulder: Winter & Company, 1994.

Jakle, John A. *City Lights: Illuminating the American Night*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001

McPherson, Tina. "Rabbit Ears Motel Sign Routt County Historic Register Nomination." 2003.

"New Rabbit Ears Motel Plans To Open This Week," *Steamboat Pilot*, 3 Sept. 1953: 10.

Property tax records, Routt County Assessor's Office, Steamboat Springs.

Richards, Dee. *Steamboat Round the Bend*. Steamboat Springs: *Steamboat Pilot*, 1976.

"Steamboat Springs Draws Record Number of Visitors This Year As Many Attractions Are Publicized," *Steamboat Pilot*, 23 July 1953: 1.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Rabbit Ears Motel Sign is located in Lot 3, Block 24 of the Original Town of Steamboat Springs, Section 17, Township 6 North, Range 84 West. The boundary includes the sign and the property extending three feet in each direction to form a rectangle from the footprint of the sign.

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1- except as noted:

Name of Property: Rabbit Ears Motel Sign
Location: 201 Lincoln Avenue, Steamboat Springs, CO
Photographer: Lauren Schaffer
Date of Photographs: May 12, 2006
Negatives: Steamboat Springs Historic Preservation Office

Photo No. _____ Photographic Information _____

- 1 view from south
- 2 view from west
- 3 view from west
- 4 view from east
- 5 view from east
- 6 view from northeast

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

SITE SKETCH MAP

Property Name Rabbit Ears Motel Sign

USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP
Steamboat Springs Quadrangle, Colorado
7.5 Minute Series (enlarged), 1969

